



CLASSIS CHATHAM
of the Christian Reformed Church in North America
www.classischatham.ca

Saturday, February 1, 2020
hosted by Grace Christian Reformed Church, Chatham, ON

MINUTES

Officers & Appointments (for this meeting)

Chair: Rev. Mark Verbruggen (Sarnia-Living Hope) / **Vice-Chair:** Rev. Derek Bouma (Strathroy-East)

Stated Clerk: Ron Middel

Credentials & Instructions Committee: Blenheim and Dresden

Balloting Committee: Chatham-Grace

Synodical Deputies in Attendance:

Rev. Gary van Leeuwen – Synodical Deputy (Classis Huron), Rev. Ed Visser – Synodical Deputy (Classis Hamilton), Rev. Kenneth Van Schelven – Synodical Deputy (Classis Quinte)

Delegates in Attendance:

| Church | Minister | Elder | Deacon |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Aylmer | Louis Bosma (Comm Pastor) | Eddie Lensink** | Gordon Wells** |
| Blenheim | Tim Luimes | Harold VanderEnde | Brian Fallak |
| Chatham-Calvary | Norman Visser | Art Brouwer | |
| Chatham-First | Nate Van Denend | Dave VanGorkum | Rob Hummelen |
| Chatham-Grace | | Phil Nywening** | Glenna Middel** |
| | | Myrna Panjer | |
| Dresden | Andrew Zomerman | Joe Grootenboer | Preston Poppe |
| Essex | | John vanHuizen | Jim Geschiere** |
| Ingersoll | | | Nicki Vandervecht** |
| London-Bethel | Eric Groot-Nibbelink | Steve te Bokkel | Harry Jeninga |
| London-Forest City | Nick Vander Ploeg (Comm Pastor) | | |
| London-Good News | | John Haagsma | Mike Stoddard** |
| London-Talbot Street | Steve Dozeman | John De Wit | |
| London-Vitalpoint | Ron Baker (Comm Pastor) | | |
| Mount Brydges-Hope | | Dave Dieleman | Fred Holman |
| | | Ron Grasman | |
| St. Thomas-Destination | Beth Fellingier (Comm Pastor) | Jim Hertner** | |
| St. Thomas-Fellowship | | Ys Boekestyn | Dave Scheele |
| St. Thomas-The Junction | George Lubbers | Paul Nieman | |
| Sarnia-First | Dave Van Berkel | Mich VanReenen** | Stephen Nienhuis** |
| Sarnia-Living Hope | Mark Verbruggen | Linda VanBarneveld | Art Capelle |
| Sarnia-Redeemer | | Mello Mellema** | Ed Wallace |
| Strathroy-East | Derek Bouma | Hank Haan | Paul Beimers |
| Strathroy-Westmount | Peter Hoytema | Helina Baker | Tina Sandink** |
| Tillsonburg | Harold Winter | Eric Schuurman | Jan denBoer |
| Wallaceburg | Josh Tuininga | Dick Bulsink | Beth Lubbers** |
| Windsor-Ambassador | Darrell Edgar | | Tanya Carver** |
| Woodstock-Covenant | John Moelker | Jenny Bouma | Diane Pautler |
| Woodstock-Maranatha | Daryl Meijer | Grace VandenDool | Ada DeVor |
| Wyoming | | John Krале | Nick Jonkman |

** Denotes first-time delegates who signed the Covenant for Officebearers

Other Attendees/Guests: (at various times throughout the meeting)
Harry Verburg – Classis Treasurer
Yvonne Lammers – Classis Chatham Safe Church Committee
Patricia Van Reenen – Classis Chatham Safe Church Committee / CMC
Marianne Kingma – Classis Chatham Safe Church
Peter Elgersma – Canadian Advancement Director, CRCNA
Rev. Jim Poelman – Sarnia-Redeemer
Rev. Fred Heslinga – Pastor of Visitation, Chatham-Grace
Doug Bonvanie – St. Thomas-The Junction

TOGETHER WE ARE A SPIRITUALLY DISCERNING COMMUNITY

1. **Welcome, Opening Worship, Ministry Reflection**
 - 1.1 Rev. Fred Heslinga, on behalf of the host church, welcomed all. After a few administrative instructions, he led in opening worship. The assembly, led by Grace CRC Worship Coordinator Rachel Hoekstra and Lisa DeRaadt, worshiped with the singing of “Here I am to Worship” and “In Christ Alone”. Rev. Heslinga then reflected on a portion of 2Corinthians, encouraging us to let our light shine like Christ.
 - 1.2 Ministry Reflections – Value: *Leadership Development*
At this meeting of classis, we intentionally focused and reflected on the core value of *Leadership Development*. Rev. Josh Tuininga introduced the session, followed by three churches sharing their joys and struggles on this value. Following each report, another church prayed for the church that had just reported.
Reporting: Aylmer / Praying: Chatham-First
Reporting: Blenheim / Praying: Chatham-Grace
Reporting: Chatham-Calvary / Praying: Dresden
2. **Constitution of Classis**
 - 2.1 Rev. Heslinga called the meeting to order.
 - 2.2 **Credentials Committee Report (Part One)**
Rev. Tim Luimes (Blenheim) reported for the Credentials Committee. All of the 28 churches were present, with 68 delegates registered, including 16 first-time delegates. All first-time delegates had signed the Covenant for Officebearers.
Rev. Luimes welcomed Rev. Joe Hamilton, Pastor (elect) at Sarnia-Redeemer.
Rev. Luimes reported that two churches, Sarnia-First and London-Vitalpoint, did not have credentials submitted properly. M/S to allow them to be seated ... carried.
 - 2.3 Rev. Heslinga declared Classis as constituted, introducing Rev. Mark Verbruggen of Sarnia-Living Hope and Rev. Derek Bouma of Strathroy-East as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively. Mr. Ron Middel was seated as the Clerk.
 - 2.4 Chair Verbruggen offered some opening remarks, and then led us through the agenda.
3. **Nomination/Election of Delegates and Alternates to Synod 2020**
 - 3.1 Following a nomination and voting process throughout the day, the following were elected to Synod 2020:
Minister Delegate – Norman Visser (Chatham-Calvary)
Minister Alternate – Dave VanBerkel (Sarnia-First)
Elder Delegate – Diane Plug (Sarnia-First)
Elder Alternate – Jake Bentum (Woodstock-Maranatha)
Deacon Delegate – Benna Nicolai (Chatham-Grace)
Deacon Alternate – none
Other Office Bearer Delegate – Mark Verbruggen (Sarnia-Living Hope)
Other Office Bearer Alternate – John Moelker (Woodstock-Covenant)

- 3.2 As a majority (50%+1) is required for Minister Delegates and Rev. Mark Verbruggen achieved 50%, rather than proceeding with another ballot it is M/S to accept 50% ... carried.
- 3.3 As there is only one Deacon nominee, it is M/S to approve Benna Nicolai as Deacon Delegate ... carried.

TOGETHER WE HAVE SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

4. Church Counselor Reports

- 4.1 Aylmer: Rev. John Moelker reports that Aylmer's Search Committee meets faithfully, challenged with a difficult task.
- 4.2 Chatham-Grace: Rev. Nate Van Denend reports that Grace is "hopeful".
- 4.3 Essex: Rev. Norman Visser reports that Essex Search Committee has resumed their work after a recent decline. They are moving in a positive direction and continue to have the support of their congregation.
- 4.4 Ingersoll: Rev. Daryl Meijer reports that Ingersoll has invited a candidate to preach later this month.
- 4.5 London-Good News: Rev. Derek Bouma reports that Good News is at work doing some self-reflection and hope to soon present those results to the congregation.
- 4.6 Sarnia-Redeemer: Rev. Dave VanBerkel reports that Rev. Joe Hamilton has accepted the call of Redeemer.
- 4.7 St. Thomas-Fellowship: Rev. George Lubbers reports that Fellowship is in the early stages. A Search Committee is in place, and they are doing some visioning at this stage.
- 4.8 Wyoming: Rev. Peter Hoytema reports that Wyoming is crafting their ministerial profile. Things are moving very well.

5. Morning Refreshment Break

6. Safe Church Presentation: Criminal History and Involvement in the Church

Yvonne Lammers and Patricia Van Reenen of Classis Chatham Safe Church presented on the topic of Criminal History and Involvement in the Church. The purpose of the presentation was to raise awareness and provide resources if or when the time arises. The Chair thanked for their thorough and informative presentation.

TOGETHER WE DO MINISTRY

7. Classical Ministries Committee (CMC) Report

Chair of CMC, Rev. Norman Visser presented the CMC Report.

- 7.1 Rev. Dave VanBerkel and Rev. John Moelker have formulated and distributed an evaluation to classis committees. They hope to have a report with recommendations to our next meeting.
- 7.2 The Safe Church Committee budget was increased by \$500 (\$1,500 to \$2,000) due to an oversight during the budget process. CMC also approved \$1,000 to support an Ontario Classes Pastor's Retreat for pastors and their spouses.
- 7.3 Classis received with gratitude a thank-you note from London-Vitalpoint for the grant approved at the last meeting of classis. We are also pleased to hear that discussions continue for them to move towards becoming an organized church.
- 7.4 CMC has spent some time evaluating classis, also has considered our new agenda format that we have been using this past year. We recognize that there are challenges in planning and carrying out the agenda with this format.
- 7.5 CMC has empowered their Chair and Treasurer to assemble a team, with the objective to create a robust application process for the Church Plant Fund that is clear to everyone.
- 7.6 CMC is also considering the concept of implementing a "Jump Start Fund". The fund is

to assist our churches with repositioning, revitalizing, rejuvenation, refreshing and stimulating the spiritual growth of their congregations. This proposal is referred to the committee that is looking at the Church Plant Fund Application process.

7.7 CMC has received requests from four members for Licensure to Exhort. A special meeting of classis (contracta) is being planned for Tuesday, March 24 at London-Bethel to examine three. The other will be examined at a later date.

7.8 After receiving a recommendation from Sarnia-Redeemer, as well as the Western Campus Board, Rev. Mike Wagenman is presented to classis for approval to be our nominee to the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA. Since CMC met, Sarnia-Living Hope has nominated Rev. Mark Verbruggen as our nominee to the Council of Delegates.

Following a ballot vote ... Rev. Mark Verbruggen was elected.

7.9 After receiving a recommendation from the Fanshawe Chaplaincy Committee, CMC approved and recommends that Anita Plat-Kuiken (London-Talbot Street) be approved to serve on the Fanshawe Chaplaincy Committee. M/S to approve ... carried.

7.10 Beth Fellingner, with the assistance of several others, presented the following proposal that our current Prayer Coordinator position be replaced by creating a Prayer Ministries Team. CMC recommends that Appendix "B" Prayer Coordinator Goals" be replaced with "Prayer Ministries Team".

CMC recommends approval. M/S to approve ... discussion ... carried.

Appendix B Revised

- *Create a Prayer Ministries Team, rather than a Prayer Coordinator.*
- *Develop a team that will represent the churches of classis (8-10 people).*
- *This team will meet quarterly to engage and develop an ongoing prayer strategy for classis.*
- *There will be regular communication with CMC by report at CMC meetings.*
- *The Prayer Team will intentionally become a part of and engage in denominational structure for prayer using the prayer channel of the Network. Relevant information from this source will be shared to churches in classis.*
- *The team will connect to Dunamis resources and encourage involvement in prayer modules.*
- *The Team will create awareness and possible participation with GPS (Global Prayer Summit) when in Canada.*
- *Create and host a yearly Day of Prayer for the churches of Classis Chatham (a day of training, resourcing and practical applications of prayer).*
- *The Prayer Team will create a space to share and received prayer requests on behalf of Classis (a potential zoom call once a month for those interested in praying together).*

"You can certainly pray alone, but something beautiful happens when you can pray together." – Charles Kim

7.11 CMC has received a recommendation from the Church Plant Team, Ron Baker (London-Vitalpoint) is presented to serve on the Team. M/S to approve ... carried.

8. **Panel Presentation: Multisite Transformational Stories**

Rev. Norman Visser facilitated this session focusing on three multisite churches. The pastors of those churches participated in the panel: London-Forest City's Nick Vander Ploeg of their East Campus; Strathroy-Westmount's Rev. Peter Hoytema of Compass Community Church; London-Vitalpoint's Ron Baker of Vitalpoint Exeter.

The three pastors shared their experiences, the reasons for beginning the second sites, the blessings as well as challenges.

9. Lunch and Committee Meetings

Prior to breaking for lunch, the Chair offered prayer, giving thanks for God's leading during the morning session and asked for a blessing on our meal together.

10. Afternoon Devotions

Rev. Heslinga opened the afternoon session. The Worship Team led in the singing of "Ten Thousand Reasons". Rev. Heslinga then prayed for the afternoon session, including asking for a blessing on the Candidate Marcel Kuiper and the examination process.

11. Candidate Marcel Kuiper Examination

Having accepted a Letter of Call from St. Thomas-Fellowship to become their Interim Pastor Spiritual Formation and Community Life, Candidate Marcel Kuiper is presented to Classis for examination, in accordance with Article 10, C.O.

11.1 Introduction of Synodical Deputies: Chair Verbruggen had earlier introduced Rev. Gary van Leeuwen (Classis Huron), Rev. Ed Visser (Classis Hamilton), and Rev. Kenneth Van Schelven (Classis Quinte) as the Synodical Deputies.

11.2 Introduction of Candidate: Rev. John Moelker introduced the candidate to the assembly.

11.3 Practica Examination: Mr. Kuiper is examined by Rev. Moelker, followed by an opportunity for the delegates and Synodical Deputies to ask questions.

11.4 Motion to Proceed: Following an opportunity for questions, it is M/S to proceed in the examination ... carried.

11.5 Sermon Evaluation: Rev. Jim Poelman, on behalf of himself and Elder Harold Vander Ende (Blenheim), presents verbal critiques on the assigned text of Genesis 22:1-19 which was preached at St. Thomas-Fellowship on January 12, 2020 as well as two other sermons submitted by Marcel, as per Art. 10. Copies of the examiner's reports are filed with the Stated Clerk.

11.6 Motion to Proceed: Following an opportunity for questions and discussion, it is M/S to proceed in the examination ... carried.

11.7 Synodical Deputies report that they concur.

11.8 Biblical and Theological Position Examination: Mr. Kuiper is examined by Rev. Josh Tuininga. This is followed by an opportunity for questions and discussion.

11.9 Executive Session: The Chair declares Executive Session. Permission to remain is given to the Stated Clerk, Ron Middel.

The minutes of this session are recorded in the **Executive Session Minutes**.

11.10 Return to Regular Session: Chair Verbruggen announces to Candidate Marcel Kuiper that he has sustained his examination. He is congratulated as he is admitted into the Ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America, with the concurring advice of the Synodical Deputies.

11.11 The Chair presents Marcel with a Classical Diploma. Rev. Derek Bouma offers a prayer of thanksgiving and blessing for Marcel and his ministry.

11.12 Following a spontaneous applause, delegates are given an opportunity to offer their personal congratulations.

12. Rev. Greg Fluit Article 17-a Separation

As Rev. Greg Fluit and the Council of St. Thomas-Fellowship have requested approval of an Article 17-a C.O. separation, as Rev. Fluit discerns God's future vocational direction/calling in his life. Synodical Deputies are in attendance.

12.1 Rev. Norman Visser, on behalf of CMC, recommends approval, and refers to Article 17-a C.O.

12.2 M/S to approve the Article 17-a separation. A ballot vote is conducted resulting in the motion ... carried.

12.3 Synodical Deputies report that they concur with the decision.

13. Afternoon Refreshment Break

14. Classical Church Planting Team Presentation

Rev. Daryl Meijer reported for the committee.

- 14.1 Pastor Daryl Meijer presented for the Church Plant Team. A document “Downtown Windsor Church Plant Proposal” had been distributed with the agenda.
- 14.2 Proposal: That Classis Chatham approve in principle, a new incarnational Christian Reformed church in downtown Windsor, Ontario, with a target date of September 2020, and led by a bi-vocational church planter.
- 14.3 As further details need to be worked out regarding such things as program costs, Search Team, “Calling” church, the Team requests approval in principle only at this time. The Team hopes to come back to classis at our May meeting with more details and plans to request full approval at that time.
- 14.4 M/S to approve the proposal as in 14.2 above ... carried.

15. Report of the Credentials Committee (Part 2)

Rev. Andrew Zomerman reported on the following submission received on the credentials:

- 15.1 St. Thomas-The Junction: “Provide someone to come and do a training workshop for officebearers.”
Response: Committee notes that there are several things that our churches could benefit from. I.e.: Day of Encouragement, denominational resources, and webinars. A straw poll was conducted, and several other churches indicated that they would also appreciate training. CMC is asked to consider providing training.
- 15.2 St. Thomas-The Junction: “Discuss how various churches are addressing indigenous issues, gay rights, sex trafficking on the 401.”
Response: Committee had a conversation with The Junction. They are asking how do we, as churches, create safe places to have some of these hard conversations. CMC is asked to consider bringing in a speaker.
- 15.3 Sarnia-Living Hope: “Living Hope CRC nominates Pastor Mark Verbruggen for Council of Delegates (as per Item 16.1.1 of Agenda).
Response: This was addressed earlier on the agenda.
- 15.4 Chatham-First: Please don’t schedule pulpit supply on Easter Sunday.
Response: Committee recommends CMC consider this. Stated Clerk notes that as this is a change to our Rules of Classis, an overture should be submitted for consideration.

16. Classical Standing Committee Reports

- 16.1 Nomination Committee: The Functionary and Committee schedule was received.
- 16.2 Fanshawe Campus Committee: June 20 Minutes – RFI
- 16.3 Western Campus Committee: September 30 Minutes – RFI
- 16.4 London Campus Board: May 21 Minutes – RFI
- 16.5 Church Plant Team: September 10, October 3, November 7 Minutes – RFI

TOGETHER WE ARE PART OF A DENOMINATION

17. Ministry Shares “Re-Imagined”

Considering that Synod 2019 adopted, in principle, changes to the Ministry Shares program, and that it is presented to Synod 2020 for approval, Peter Elgersma, Canadian Advancement Director, CRCNA presented the proposed change to classis.

Proposed changes:

- The ministry share year will move to a fiscal year July 1 through June 30
- No prescribed per-member allocation amount

- Each congregation will prayerfully pledge what they can give
 - Pledges will be discussed at fall classis meetings and then reported to CRCNA
- What is required of classis now?

- Decided if emerging churches should participate
- Understand the timeline
- Facilitate discussion about the overall pledge amount
- Record pledge amounts
- Report pledges to the denomination

Delegates are given an opportunity to ask questions and Peter is thanked for his presentation.

18. Other Provided Reports

- 18.1 Thank you note from London-Vitalpoint (Ron Baker) – RFI
- 18.2 Council of Delegates October Highlights – RFI
- 18.3 Fanshawe Chaplain Report – RFI
- 18.4 Western Chaplain Report – RFI
- 18.5 Redeemer University College Winter Report – RFI
- 18.6 Canadian Ministries Director Fall Report – RFI
- 18.7 World Renew Winter Report – RFI

CLOSING

19. Announcements/Encouragements

Delegates were offered the opportunity to encourage each other and share information regarding various ministries and events.

- 19.1 Notice of Special Classis (contracta) meeting on March 24, 2020 at London-Bethel to examine two applicants for Licensure to Exhort.
- 19.2 Sarnia-Redeemer joyfully invites churches to Pastor Joe Hamilton's installation service on Sunday, March 1st @ 9:30 a.m.
- 19.3 Rev. Andrew Zomerman shared news of a Pastor-Spouse Retreat planned May 5-7 at the Muskoka Bible Centre. Information will be forthcoming in the next few weeks. Pastors are encouraged to attend, and Councils are encouraged to support.

20. Unfinished Business

- 20.1 M/S to destroy the ballots of the day ... carried.

21. Closing & Adjournment

- 21.1 Vice-Chair Rev. Derek Bouma thanked the Chair for his leadership during a very busy agenda. Chatham-Grace is also thanked for being wonderful hosts. The Chair closed the meeting with prayer.
- 21.2 Adjournment at 4:48 p.m.

*Minutes were prepared by Ron Middel, Stated Clerk. Items may have been dealt with in a slightly different order, or differently due to time flexibility and adjustments in the agenda.
Send comments and questions by email to statedclerk@classischatham.ca*

NEXT AGENDA MATERIALS DEADLINE: Tuesday, April 7, 2020 @ 5:00 p.m.

UPCOMING SESSIONS OF CLASSIS CHATHAM

Special (contracta) 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 24, 2020 @ London-Bethel
 Tuesday, May 26, 2020 @ Woodstock-Maranatha
 Tuesday, September 22, 2020 @ Sarnia-Living Hope
 Saturday, February 6, 2021 @ Dresden